



Town of Amherst
Voter Information Guide
The polls will be open March 8, 2022
at Souhegan High School between 6 AM and 8 PM

This document has been developed by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to help you better understand each article on the warrant.

This past year the municipal portion of the total Amherst tax bill was 20% of the Town's total tax rate. Of the 31 municipalities that make up Hillsborough County, 22 communities have a higher municipal tax rate. The Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator and Department Heads have systemized the budget process to focus on those items that will continue to move the town forward. Since 2013 the departments have been working with annually updated strategic plans. This is the means of creating a purposeful and intentional operating budget.

These plans are reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen and the Ways & Means Committee as part of the budget cycle. This has resulted in a process allowing the BOS and the Ways and Means Committee to focus on how budgetary requests for specific initiatives fit into the strategies outlined in the plans. For more information on the Strategic Planning process, visit our website at <https://www.amherstnh.gov/board-selectmen/pages/strategic-planning-budget-process>.

We encourage you to become educated on all the issues, to make informed decisions, and to come to the polls at Souhegan High School on Tuesday, March 8th to cast your votes.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our employees, our Ways and Means Committee, and the citizens who participated in the process that has produced the warrant before you. We could not have been as effective without the help and participation of all involved. We would also like to thank you for the opportunity to represent you, and we appreciate your support as we work together to keep Amherst a great community in which to live, work, and raise a family.

Sincerely,

The Board of Selectmen

Peter Lyon , Chairman
Tom Grella, Selectman

Dwight Brew, Vice Chairman
John D'Angelo, Selectman

Danielle Pray, Clerk

Amherst residents will have an opportunity to vote on the proposed budget and other Town matters:

When: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 between 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM.

Where: Souhegan High School at 412 Boston Post Road.

The following information is provided as a public service to enable citizens to better understand the matters on which they will be voting. Additional information may be obtained by calling the Town Administrator's Office at (603) 673-6041, or by visiting the Town's website at www.amherstnh.gov.

2023 Proposed Warrant Articles

ARTICLE 21: To choose all necessary Town Officers for the ensuing terms as follows:

2 Selectmen for 3 Years

1 Town Moderator for 2 Years

1 Cemetery Trustee for 3 Years

3 Library Trustees for 3 Years

1 Trustee of the Trust Funds for 3 Years

1 Supervisor of the Checklist for 6 Years

1 Zoning Board of Adjustment Member for 3 Years

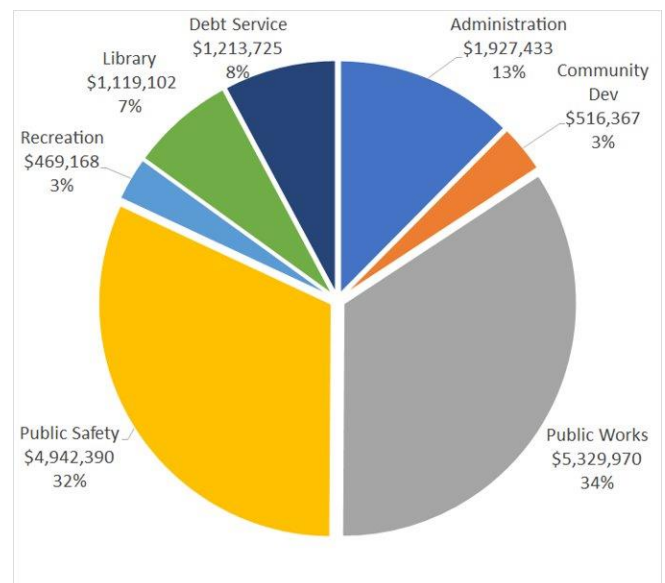
ARTICLE 22: Operating Budget

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth herein, totaling **\$15,518,154**. Should this article be defeated the default budget shall be **\$14,928,440** which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting in accordance with RSA 40:13 X and XVI to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. This operating budget warrant article does not include appropriations contained in any other warrant article. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 4-1-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has an estimated tax impact of \$3.96 (three dollars and ninety-six cents) per thousand. The prior year operating budget had a tax impact of \$3.91 per thousand.

The Board of Selectmen worked closely with Department Heads and the Ways & Means Committee in preparing the FY23 proposed budget. Significant time was spent evaluating the needs of the town to accurately develop a responsible budget to present to voters. The increase in the FY23 proposed budget over the previous year is \$640,478 or 4.3 %.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES INCLUDE:	OVER (UNDER)
4% COLA	\$180,000
Health Insurance Rates	\$119,000
Health Insurance Individual Plans	\$83,000
Town Clerk Office Hours	\$25,000
Police CBA Wages	\$30,000
Police Retirement	\$49,000
Road Rebuild	\$100,000
Souhegan Regional Landfill District	\$50,000
Master Plan	(\$54,000)
DPW Part Time Wages	(\$30,000)
Pennichuck Hydrant Rental	(\$50,000)
Interest Bonds & Notes	(\$25,000)
Stormwater II Projects	(\$15,000)



PROPOSED BUDGET SUMMARY: \$15,518,154

ARTICLE 23: Contingency Fund

Shall the Town vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year, in accordance with NH RSA Section 31:98-a, for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred-twenty thousand dollars **(\$120,000)** to go into the fund. Said sum shall come from the undesignated fund balance and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left in the fund at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund. (Majority vote required).

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.

In August of 2013, a new law regarding contingency funding came into effect (RSA 31:98-a). This law outlines the process the Selectmen must follow regarding the establishment of a contingency fund.

By approving this article, you will be giving the Selectmen the authority to withdraw up to \$120,000 from the undesignated fund balance, if some unforeseen circumstance should arise during the year. The NH Department of Revenue Administration has determined that this article will not have an impact on your property taxes.

ARTICLE 24: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars **(\$25,000)** to be added to the Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has an estimated tax impact of \$0.01 (one cent) per thousand. The Communication CRF balance as of 12/31/2021 is \$112,081.

The Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund was established in 2006 to fund major

equipment repairs and upgrades to the town's emergency communication center and to provide a source of matching funds for state and federal communication system grants. Contributions of \$25,000 each year are needed to maintain the fund for upcoming grant funding matches and long-term equipment replacement projects such as:

- Primary radio tower replacement in 2022-23 requiring an estimated \$45,000 match.
- Radio console replacement in 2025 requiring an estimated \$100,000 match.

ARTICLE 25: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars **(\$25,000)** to be added to the Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.01 (one cent) per thousand. The Assessing CRF balance as of 12/31/2021 is \$52,682.

This article adds \$25,000 to the existing Capital Reserve Fund that has been established to budget for the State mandated reassessment of all properties in Amherst. The law, RSA 75:8-a, requires a revaluation take place every 5 years. The next revaluation will occur in Tax Year 2026 which will fall in fiscal year 2027. This \$25,000 request is one of the yearly installments needed to reach the estimated cost of \$125,000.

ARTICLE 26: Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred thousand **(\$200,000)** to be added to the Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.09 (nine cents) per thousand. The Bridge Repair and Replacement CRF balance as of 12/31/2021 is \$785,402.

In 2017 a 9-year plan was developed to bring all bridges and water crossings into good condition. There are 20 bridges in Amherst and 3 water crossings. This capital reserve fund provides the funding mechanism for the replacement of red-listed bridges which voters have previously approved. Those bridges are Mont Vernon Road over Caesars Brook, Thornton Ferry Road I over Beaver Brook and Brook Road over Joe English Brook. New failures occur that also need to be addressed. For instance, two years ago the twin culverts on Merrimack Rd failed as well as one of the twin culverts on The Flume.

ARTICLE 27: Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of two hundred fifty-seven thousand dollars **(\$257,000)** to be added to the Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.11 (eleven cents) per thousand. The balance of the Fire Rescue Vehicle & Equipment Purchase and Repair CRF is \$1,252,339 as of 12/31/2021.

This recurring capital reserve fund is intended as the funding mechanism for the large vehicle and equipment purchases of the fire rescue department. The amount requested is the result of a long-range forecast for the purchase and repair of fire trucks and ambulances. Recent purchases include the 2015 replacement of a 1988 truck, utilizing grant funding, and the 2021 replacement

of a 1994 truck. In 2022, AFR will develop specifications to replace a 1991 fire engine.

Replacing these large emergency vehicles is very costly and making regular additions to this capital reserve fund allows for the consistent and predictable annual cost to be evenly spread over multiple years.

ARTICLE 28: DPW Vehicles and Equipment Acquisition and Replacement CRF

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars **(\$120,000)** to be added to the DPW Vehicles & Equipment Acquisition and Replacement Fund, as previously established. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 4-1-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.05 (five cents) per thousand. The balance of the DPW Vehicles & Equipment Acquisition and Replacement CRF is \$119,843 as of 12/31/2021.

This newly requested capital reserve fund is intended to establish a fund based upon the successful model of the existing fire rescue department capital reserve fund, which has been used to replace fire rescue vehicles and equipment. The department of public works has 25 vehicles or pieces of equipment with a value ranging from \$25,000 to \$300,000. The expected life of this equipment and vehicles ranges from 10 to 30 years. As with the fire rescue department capital reserve fund a schedule of expected equipment needs, including costs and expected year of replacement, has been used as a basis for the necessary level of funding. In previous years, the operating budget included \$250,000 annually to replace DPW vehicles utilizing a lease purchase arrangement. However, by including these funds in the operating budget, the amount budgeted cannot carry over from year to year. The intention is to transition to fully utilizing the capital reserve fund to replace DPW vehicles and major equipment, migrating the requested appropriations from the operating budget to this CRF by fiscal year 2024.

ARTICLE 29: Amherst Multimodal Facilities CRF

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) to be added to the Amherst Multimodal Facilities Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority Vote Required).

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.03 (three cents) per thousand. The balance of the Amherst Multimodal Facilities CRF is \$74,901 as of 12/31/2021.

This article requests the addition of funds to a capital reserve fund created last year for Amherst multimodal facilities. These funds are sought as part of a three-year plan to raise \$75,000 each year for multimodal facilities. The committee is currently focusing on a multimodal path connecting the middle and high schools and points south of the schools. This capital reserve fund may also allow for opportunities to use cost reduction strategies such as grant funding and building multimodal infrastructure during road reconstruction.

ARTICLE 30: Village Area Multimodal Road Infrastructure Design & Engineering

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of ninety-eight thousand dollars (\$98,000) for the purpose of design engineering for reconstruction and safety improvements for streets in the village area that are scheduled for reconstruction by the Department of Public Works, and the development of application materials for state, federal, and private grant programs. This shall be a special, non-lapsing warrant article that will not lapse for a period of five years. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. This article has a tax impact of \$0.04 (four cents) per thousand.

Five streets in the village are scheduled for reconstruction in 2025: Carriage, Church, Davis,

Jones, and Main. A budget of approximately \$485,000 is planned for this project. State and federal grant opportunities exist that, if awarded, could improve the scale and scope of this project but require engineering and a 20% project funding match. This warrant article seeks to fund the necessary engineering to develop a vision for such a project, including a public input process, a project design, and grant writing. Engineering and already budgeted reconstruction funds qualify toward the 20% project funding match, allowing the town to leverage these funds for up to \$2.3 million in grant funding. Such grant funding would permit the town to expand the scope of the 2025 project, possibly including additional streets, added safety, accessibility, drainage, and intersection improvements that will benefit drivers and pedestrians.

ARTICLE 31: Recreation Fields Acquisition and Construction CRF

Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) to be added to the Recreation Fields Acquisition and Construction Capital Reserve Fund, previously established. (Majority vote required)

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. The tax impact of this article is \$0.02 (two cents) per thousand. The Recreation Fields Acquisition and Construction CRF has a balance of \$52,406 as of 12/31/21.

This is an existing capital reserve fund for which additional funding in the amount of \$50,000 is being sought this year, with intentions to do the same for one more year. The appropriation is sought for improvements to the new Buck Meadow facility, specifically to add two full sized rectangular fields, and a third smaller rectangular field, needed irrigation, additional parking, a playground, and picnic area.

ARTICLE 32: Elderly, Blind and Disabled Exemption

Shall the Town vote to modify the elderly, blind, and disabled exemptions from property tax in the Town of Amherst, based on assessed value, for qualified taxpayers to be as follows:

For elderly persons:

- 65 years of age up to 74 years inclusive, an exemption of \$104,120. (formerly \$76,000);
- 75 years of age up to 79 years inclusive, an exemption of \$156,180. (formerly \$114,000);
- 80 years of age or older, an exemption of \$ 206,870. (formerly \$151,000); and

For blind persons of any age:

- an exemption of \$ 50,690. (formerly \$37,000); and

For disabled persons of any age:

- an exemption of \$ 89,050. (formerly \$65,000); and

For the elderly and the disabled exemptions only

- a net income of not more than \$ 49,960. (formerly \$41,760) for a single person, or if married, a combined net income of less than \$ 67,640. (formerly \$57,000); and
- own assets not in excess of \$ 165,000. (formerly \$150,000) excluding the value of the person's residence in accordance with RSA 72:39-a

To qualify for any of the above exemptions, a person must have been a New Hampshire resident

for at least three (3) years (5 years for the disabled person), own real estate individually or jointly, or if the real estate is owned by such person's spouse, they must have been married for at least five (5) years. (Majority Vote Required).

The Board of Selectmen supports this article by a vote of 5-0-0. The Ways and Means Committee supports this article by a vote of 7-0-0. The tax impact of this article is \$0.03 (three cents) per thousand.

This article seeks to adjust the property tax exemptions for the elderly, blind and disabled, consistent, and in balance with, changes in property tax valuations which occurred as a result of the required five-year revaluation last year.

ARTICLE 33: New Hampshire Resolution to Stop the Puppy Mill Pipeline (By Petition)

By petition of 25 or more eligible voters of the town of Amherst; to see if the town will go on record opposing the retail sale of dogs and cats in pet stores in the town. This resolution is necessary because the majority of dogs and cats sold in pet stores are sourced from large-scale, inhumane commercial breeding facilities commonly called "puppy mills." The record of this vote shall be transmitted by written notice from the selectmen to the town's state legislators and to the Governor of New Hampshire. (Tax Impact = \$0.00)

Please feel free to bring this guide along with you on Election Day.

When: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 between 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM.

Where: Souhegan High School at 412 Boston Post Road.

<u>TOWN WARRANT ARTICLES</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
ARTICLE 22: Operating Budget		
ARTICLE 23: Contingency Fund		
ARTICLE 24: Communications Center Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 25: Assessing Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 26: Bridge Repair and Replacement Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 27: Fire Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Purchase and Repair Capital Reserve Fund		
ARTICLE 28: DPW Vehicles and Equipment Acquisition and Replacement CRF		
ARTICLE 29: Amherst Multimodal Facilities CRF		
ARTICLE 30: Village Area Multimodal Road Infrastructure Design & Engineering		
ARTICLE 31: Recreation Fields Acquisition and Construction CRF		
ARTICLE 32: Elderly, Blind and Disabled Exemption		
ARTICLE 33: New Hampshire Resolution to Stop the Puppy Mill Pipeline (By Petition)		